

Observations of Comets 46P/Wirtanen and 199501 Hale-Bopp

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We observed periodic comet 46P/Wirtanen and long-period comet C/J 99501 Hale-Bopp on three nights, June 15-17 1996, using the COSMIC CCD camera on the Palomar 200" telescope. Comet Wirtanen was inbound to the Sun at a heliocentric distance of 2.98 AU and displayed visible coma on all three nights. Comet Hale-Bopp was also inbound at 4.08 AU and displayed an extensive, irregular coma with a broad northward extension from the central condensation. We obtained BVR photometry of each comet and photometric observations of Comet Wirtanen in order to estimate the nucleus size and rotation period. We also searched for periodic comet 55P/Tempel-Tuttle, the parent of the Leonid meteor shower, which was inbound to the Sun at 649 AU. Detailed results for each comet will be presented. This work was supported by the NASA Planetary Geology and Geophysics, and Planetary Astronomy programs.

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